

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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CPT MINUTES February 23, 2006 (Adopted April 27, 2006)

Members Present: Acting Chair Byng Hunt, Mono Supervisors; Jeff Bailey, USFS/Inyo; John Eastman, Mammoth Lakes Town Council; Joe Pollini, BLM alternate; Cedrik Zemitis, Caltrans alternate; Beverly Cheeseboro, LADWP alternate; Denyse Racine, DFG

Members Absent: Joseph Saulque, Benton Paiute Reservation; Cindi Mitton, Lahontan RWQCB; Art Sam, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Cheryl Probert, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe

Staff Present: Scott Burns, C.D. Ritter

Guests Present: Karen Johnston, Town of Mammoth Lakes; Brigitte Berman, Sierra Club; Lara Kirkner, *Mammoth Times*; Hank Brown, Neubauer-Jennison Construction; Clare Cragan, Mono Lake Committee

- 1. CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE:** Acting Chair Byng Hunt called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. and led the flag salute. CPT members and guests introduced themselves.
- 2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.
- 3. MINUTES:** Approve the minutes of Dec. 15, 2005. (Eastman/Cheeseboro. Ayes: All.)
- 4. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE:** Members outlined agency planning issues and pending projects.
- 5. STATUS OF REGIONAL AIR SERVICE AT THE MAMMOTH YOSEMITE AIRPORT**

Karen Johnston, assistant town manager for Mammoth Lakes, indicated that the Federal Aviation Administration had suggested regional air service instead of long distance. A revised project description shows two 80-passenger flights/day with Los Angeles, ratcheting up to 10 flights/day in five years. Existing airport facilities could be used, with no need to expand or lengthen the existing runway. Environmental documentation (probably an Environmental Assessment) is needed, and the Town awaits many levels of approval from the FAA. The target date for service is December 2006.

Easements are needed, as well as a 20-year lease extension on LADWP land. The airport proposal includes a subsidy from Mammoth Mountain Ski Area guaranteeing five years of secure financial revenue. Then the Town will evaluate the success rate. The Bishop airport could play a role, especially in bad weather, with airline passengers traveling to Mammoth in vans, taxis and buses.

Air carriers Horizon and United have submitted letters of intent. Additional land is requested for lease from USFS in case more facilities are needed. People far away could still get to LAX as a point of departure to Mammoth. The airline industry said Los Angeles is its first market.

The Terrence Ballas development plan near the airport presents another compliance issue with the FAA. An option to purchase is not available, and there is no resolution of incongruent agreements. Transient rentals are OK, but no long-term housing. Approvals are in place, and the airlines need to know soon to start marketing in spring. The expectation is that the most seats will be sold in wintertime.

6. REPORT ON RECENT MEETING WITH LADWP COMMISSION IN LOS ANGELES

Byng Hunt, Mono County Board of Supervisors, recalled that in 2001 the CPT had hosted David Freeman regarding LADWP conservation easements, but mostly political reasons abandoned the idea. A new mayor has handpicked entirely new commissioners from different backgrounds for their expertise. All are in their own businesses. Chair Mary Nichols, a natural resources person, had been contacted by close friend Francis Spivy-Weber, formerly of the Mono Lake Committee.

The goal of the full-day Jan. 31 meeting was to look at ways to develop permanent protection of LADWP land from development. The city could decide to sell land in the future to gain capital for other

purposes, so now is a good time to discuss Eastern Sierra conservation easements for permanent watershed protection, as well as open space for tourism, agriculture and recreation.

There has been contentiousness between LADWP and the Eastern Sierra, and Nichols wants to open dialog with locals to improve relationships. Many new commissioners had not visited the Eastern Sierra, and five have come up for a tour since the meeting. The intent of easements would be educational opportunities for youth camps for inter-city kids and maintaining existing permitted uses for agriculture, access, etc. Land adjacent to existing communities is desired for growth.

The next steps would be to: 1) invite the commissioners to an excursion of the Eastern Sierra and seek their input on easements and conservation; 2) review all leases (agricultural and recreational); and 3) create a pilot project in Mono to test the easement idea and facilitate understanding.

Local LADWP staff follows the lead of upper levels in accordance with hierarchy and protocol, according to Beverly Cheeseboro. Local staff is providing information to educate commissioners about the area, resources and issues.

If lands enter into private ownership, tax revenue would be generated for counties. The USFS acquires 100,000 acres/yr in exchanges, so the federal land base is increasing. Hopefully much more developable land will become available to counties.

7. MAMMOTH LAKES GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROGRESS

John Eastman and Karen Johnston reported that the General Plan update has been discussed at joint meetings of town counsel and planning commission. Consensus was reached on some of the 16 major policy issues. The existing urban growth boundary has been reaffirmed, and the ultimate build-out population is 60,700. The goal is to finish the update by May.

Developers face onerous requirements for development. In the current workforce housing program, 100% employee housing is required of new development. The Town encourages understructure parking. An example is a project with subterranean parking at Hillside with 34 three-bedroom units on site for employees and families.

The overarching goal, according to Eastman, is that anyone who wants to live here, can. A year-round population of about 12,000 is projected. He indicated that within the town's four square miles issues can be identified realistically.

As an aside, new MMSA owner Barry Sternlicht recently stayed and skied several days. Eastman described Sternlicht as very successful and thought his architectural background should create a pleasing product. Sternlicht's interest is not limited to real estate. He plans to improve older lifts (Chairs 5, 8, 25), skiability of the mountain, traffic flow, capacity and capability. There appeared to be no desire to expand ski area boundaries. Rusty Gregory continues as the primary contact for MMSA, and the existing leadership staff remains intact. The future of June Mountain was discussed, especially with regard to cold beds (individually owned, occasional use) vs. hot beds (hotel, high turnover) needed to support the ski area.

The Town is still finishing the EIR and responses to comments. The Advocates for Mammoth has appealed three or four decisions, hopefully to avoid an appeal on the entire General Plan. Yet despite 3.5 years and only a couple of changes, there still might be an appeal of the General Plan update.

8. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

A. **WATERSHED STUDY UPDATE:** None.

B. **SAGE GROUSE:** None.

C. **LAND TENURE:** Agencies with a vested interest in a location map will meet Feb. 27 and March 27. Six or seven tribal groups (about 50 people) are attending a meeting today on fire as a form of vegetation management where dense clustering of species is overtaking habitats. BLM/USFS will survey communities for input. Fuel breaks have been on ongoing issue. Their intent is to reduce the amount of fuel so a fire can be suppressed; e.g., not stacking firewood against homes.

9. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 27, 2006. Members were urged to contact Scott Burns with agenda items. Suggestions: 1) Lahontan cutthroat trout recovery in northern Mono County, 2) update on deer and bighorn, and 3) fisheries commission presentation.

10. ADJOURN: 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, C.D. Ritter, team secretary